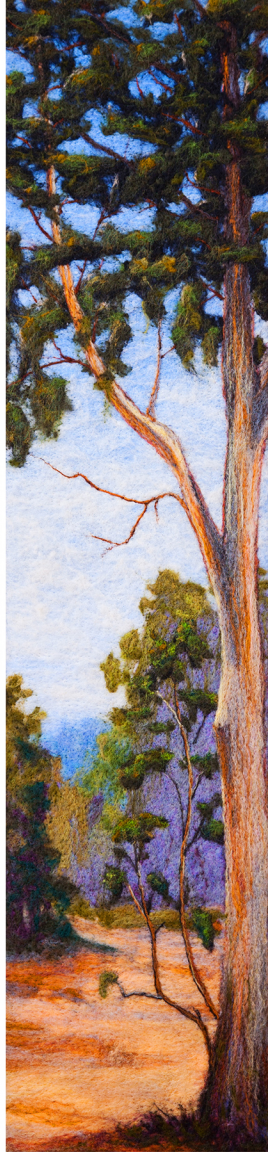


JAANA MATTSON'S
**LANDSCAPES
IN WOOL**

The Art of Needle Felting





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Project objective

This first project introduces basic techniques that lay the foundation for subsequent tutorials in this book, so get to know these steps before you move on to the Thunderhead, Moon Shadows, Birch Lake, and Lone Oak projects.

VIBRANT FIELDS

Vibrant Fields is a project I teach in my introductory workshops. It's a great way to approach some basics such as blending, fine lines, nesting, and simple color theory, among other things that we rely on in later projects. The project ends with a section on finishing, which applies to any of the following tutorials in this book.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS

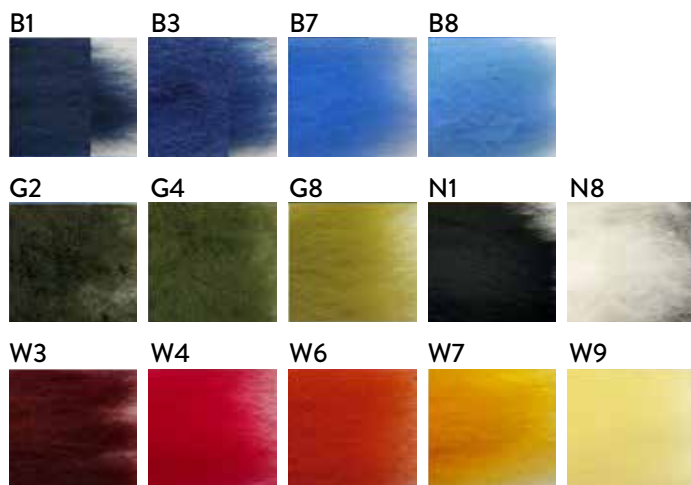
- If you want to try this project with only a single needle, the blending techniques described with the four- and six-needle holders can be approximated, but be sure to jump the needle around the loose fiber before anchoring fully, to prevent the wool from clumping too densely.
- 14 roving colors, as outlined in the wool chart for this project
 - Foam work surface (8" × 10")
 - Craft felt (5" × 7")
 - 4 head pins
 - Single felting needle (with or without handle)
 - 6- or 4-needle holder, or both (as a blending tool)

Suggested wool chart

Study your reference photo and assemble roving for the project.

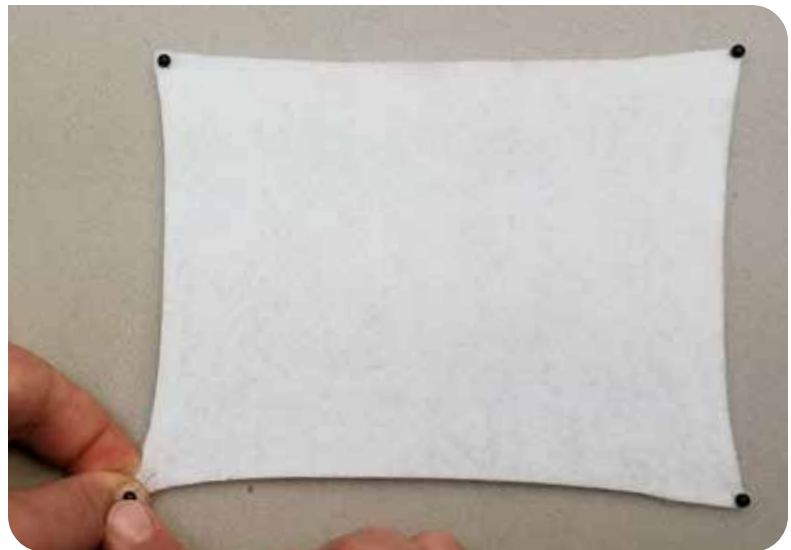
Color Key:

B1: Navy
B3: Lake
B7: Brite Sky
B8: Light Blue
G2: Deep Forest
G4: Grass Green (B)
G8: Brite Moss
N1: Black
N8: Natural White
W3: Wine
W4: Red Fire Engine
W6: Blaze Orange
W7: Gold
W9: Lemon Yellow



Anchor felt to work surface

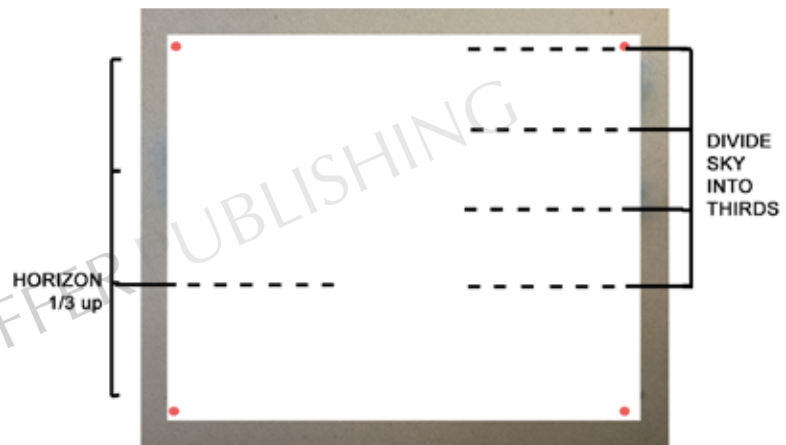
Pin the base felt to the foam block at each corner, using head pins, holding each corner under slight tension as you pin for a taut work surface.



Divide composition for a visual guide

You can guide your composition with marks along the edge of your foam block. Mark your horizon line first on both sides, one-third up from the bottom of the felt. Above the horizon line is the sky section. Divide this area into three even bands to guide the progression of three values of sky blue.

- You can draw on the base felt, but lines drawn on the surface will soon disappear under layers of wool.



Pull a fan of roving for blended layering

When filling large areas or blending values, pull a light, wide “fan” of roving rather than a thick “pinch.”





Begin the darkest blue in the top section of sky

Lay one wisp at a time in a loose fan of wool over the surface horizontally, and anchor with a six-needle tool, using a shallow poke ($\frac{1}{4}$ " or so). Don't hold the wool down tightly with your other hand; the fiber needs to be loose as you felt. Begin with the top third of the sky in your darkest value, felting and adding wisp after wisp to fill the area completely so that you see no white through the wool, before moving on to the next-lighter tone of blue.

- ➔ Always begin with the most distant part of the landscape (the sky) and build forward, layer by layer. Within each layer, begin with the darkest tint, layering each progressively lighter value over it for optimal blending.
- ➔ If you do not have a six-needle tool, you can accomplish most of these effects with a single needle, but you should skip the needle around the entire fan of wool as you go, so the fiber does not bunch up in one spot.



Blend the second value of sky blue

Once the top third is solid, fill the center third of the sky with the next-lighter blue. Blend subtle wisps of the lighter blue upward over the deeper blue to create a gentle transition until just a few fibers of the middle blue reach the top, for a seamless ombré effect.

Fill lightest sky blue down across the horizon line

Complete the sky, filling the bottom section with the lightest blue until solid, filling $\frac{1}{4}$ " lower than your horizon line, then blending subtle wisps up and over only the center blue tone.

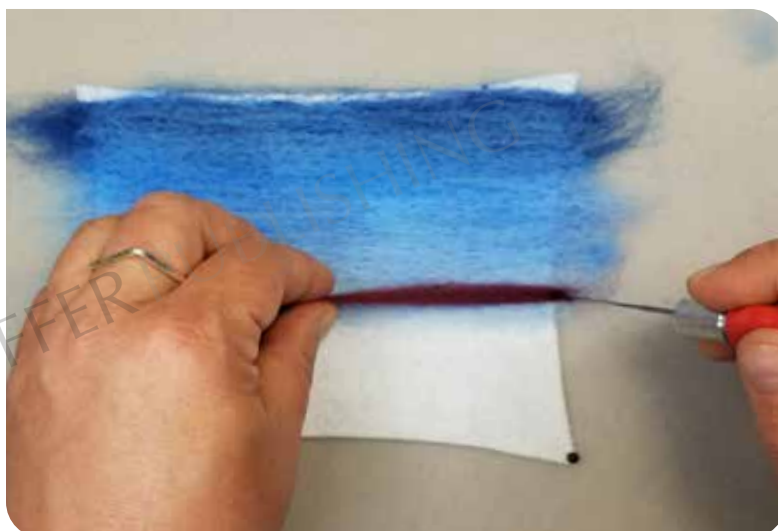
- When layering values from dark to light for an ombré effect, blend each lighter tint through the previous value only. If you take the lighter wool too far over the darker values, it appears streaky.



Add horizon line for reference in a complementary color

Create a felted line across the horizon, using a pinch of deep-red roving. Anchoring the wool off the edge of your base felt, carefully walk a single needle along a thin line ($\frac{1}{8}$ " or so wide) along the horizon from one end of each pinch of wool to the other.

- Overlap sections of landscape by at least $\frac{1}{4}$ " so that when they shrink as you felt they won't pull back to expose the base felt.
- Using red on the horizon line where there will be green trees is a complementary color choice to create a dynamic element in the landscape. Using complementary colors (those directly across the color wheel) when layering builds visual energy. You can also leave some areas of your landscape simpler without a high-contrast underpainting (such as the sky) for calmer areas of visual rest.





W7	Gold
W6	Blaze Orange
W4	Red Fire Engine
W3	Wine

Assemble complementary colors for “underpainting” of field

Since our goal is a field of deep to bright green, with dark values at the bottom to lightest at the horizon, look at your color wheel to determine the range of complementary hues (across the color wheel) for an “underpainting” to create dynamic visual energy in the finished work.



Begin undertone layers of the field

Starting with the darkest value at the bottom of the field, start layering using a six-needle tool. Move on to the next-brighter tone, working through red to orange and finally gold up onto the horizon line. You can be a bit sloppy with the layers here, with gaps and overlaps in color to give the earth some texture.



Finish undertone layers up to the horizon

After loosely blending the range of undertones with a six-needle tool, use a single needle to anchor the lightest field tone (gold) at the horizon line, being careful to keep any wisps below that line so they will not stray into the blue sky.

Clouds: Atmospheric haze at the horizon

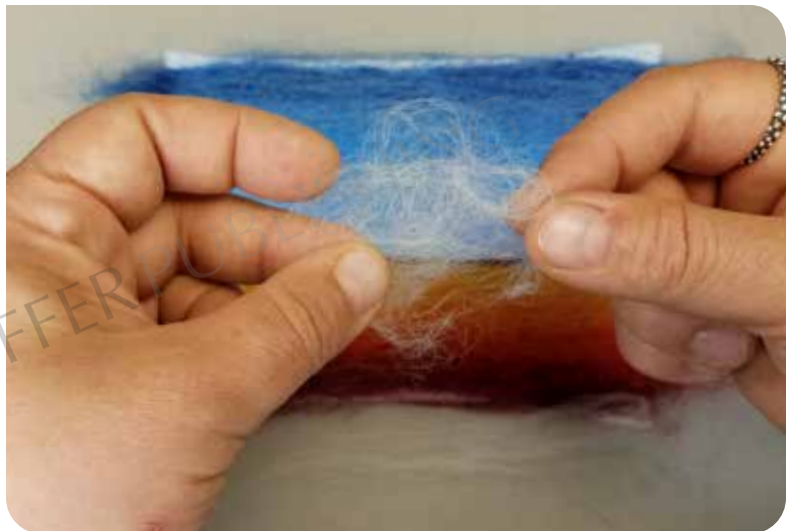
Pull a fan of white/natural roving and anchor lightly with a multi-needle tool horizontally across the sky, just above the horizon line, to create a distant atmospheric haze.

- ➔ Most “white” roving is actually the natural, undyed wool of “white” sheep. Natural wool comes in varying shades of cream, but if it is the lightest value in your work, it will “read” as white. You can find bleached or chemically lightened wools, but this is rarely necessary to achieve a white effect. Do be aware of these variations when using more than one type of natural wool in a piece (good full-spectrum lighting helps).



Clouds: Batt- vs. roving-style wool

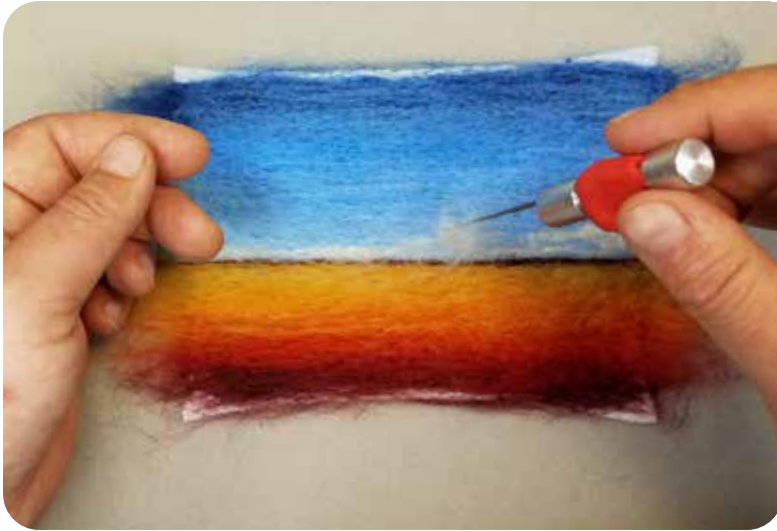
Batt-style wool, as opposed to linear roving (see Understanding Wool), is much kinkier and will easily felt into fluffy-looking clouds. Roving must be “nested” to achieve this same elasticity, allowing you to shape the clouds effectively. To nest roving, begin with a small wisp and separate the fibers gently.



Clouds: Nesting technique continued

Roll the small wisp of fibers between three fingers to loosely concentrate the wad of wool.





Clouds: Anchor the nested roving

Place the wad of wool on the felted surface and poke in the center a few times with a single needle to anchor the fiber, then circle your needle around the wool to gather the fiber before poking down to anchor the wad, and begin to shape the cloud. The more you circle the wool, the tighter your wool becomes and the less elasticity it retains when felted, so stay kind of loose.

- ➔ No single cloud (or most any shape) is made from a single wisp or wad of wool. Start your cloud by felting one wisp of wool, and add more as needed. This gives you much more control to grow the shape without being “stuck” with a tightly felted single wad of fibers that won’t offer the flexibility to manipulate your shape.



Clouds: Start small in the distance at the horizon

Careful study of a cloud-filled sky will show many small and narrow clouds hugging the horizon, often overlapping in a row.

Clouds: Grow larger and farther apart as they rise in the sky

Be careful not to fill your entire sky with evenly spaced clouds of similar size and shape. Make a conscious effort to create variety in shape and size, growing larger and farther apart as they move upward from the horizon.

- There is no better reference for clouds than photographs. The shapes in nature are always stranger than our mind's eye wants to believe, and I highly recommend having printed photos on hand for reference if realism is your goal.



Clouds: Editing

Don't be afraid to pull entire clouds out of your textile if they feel too crowded.

- Before you move on to the next section of landscape, assess the balance and success of the composition of this section (clouds, in this case). This is your last good chance to easily modify the area before it ends up behind another element, such as trees. Make it interesting, be sure your clouds flow over the edges of your textile, and add or remove as necessary to avoid the common mistakes of symmetry, pattern, overcrowding, etc.



Treeline: Create silhouette with nested wool

Nest wisps of black roving and begin to build your treeline on and above the horizon line.





Add nested wads to continue treeline

Add nested wads of roving to create groupings of treetops in silhouette. Alternate shapes and spacing for interest and character, letting the treeline drop to a thin line in the middle to create a sense of distance.



Which way does the sun shine?

Define the direction of the light source.



Start with medium-green highlight

On the edge of each shape, where the sun hits the edge of a tree within the silhouette, add a bit of grass-green wool. Cover the black edge with green on the highlight side and let the wool taper out to black on the far shadow side of each shape.

Add brightest-green highlight

Roll a tiny wisp of bright moss green and add a small highlight to the center of each grass-green shape.



Add a splash of navy to offset symmetry

Add a fan of navy roving to one bottom corner of your field to add a bit of depth and shadow to the roll of the land.

